BLM Alaska
FRONTIERS

News about BLM-managed public lands in Alaska

ISSUE 88 SPRING 2003

Alpine Satellite EIS begins

BLM to analyze proposed oil development in NE NPR-A

First commercial oil from reserve possible by 2008

BLM will produce an environmental impact statement (EIS) evaluating full development in the northeast corner of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska and along the Colville River. The EIS is being initiated in connection with a proposal from ConocoPhillips to develop prospective satellite oil fields that could lead to the first commercial oil production from the NPR-A by 2008. Oil from the Colville River delta could begin flowing as soon as 2006. ConocoPhillips announced commercial discoveries following several seasons of winter drilling following a 1999 lease sale.

BLM will serve as the lead agency, providing day-to-day coordination and direction for the *Alpine Satellite Development EIS*. Coordinating agencies include the State of Alaska, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. BLM has selected Entrix, an environmental consulting firm, to assist in preparing this EIS.

The Alpine field is the focal point for developing recent discoveries in the NPR-A and adjacent areas along the Colville River.

Public scoping meetings will be held in Anchorage (March 6), Fairbanks (March 20), Barrow (March 17) and Nuiqsut (March 18). "These meetings will help BLM identify issues, alternatives and potential mitigation as well as help provide resource, subsistence and other valuable information for the EIS," said BLM Alaska State Director Henri Bisson. Public scoping comments will be accepted through March 31.

A draft document will be released for public comment in November or December. The final EIS will be completed in the summer of 2004.

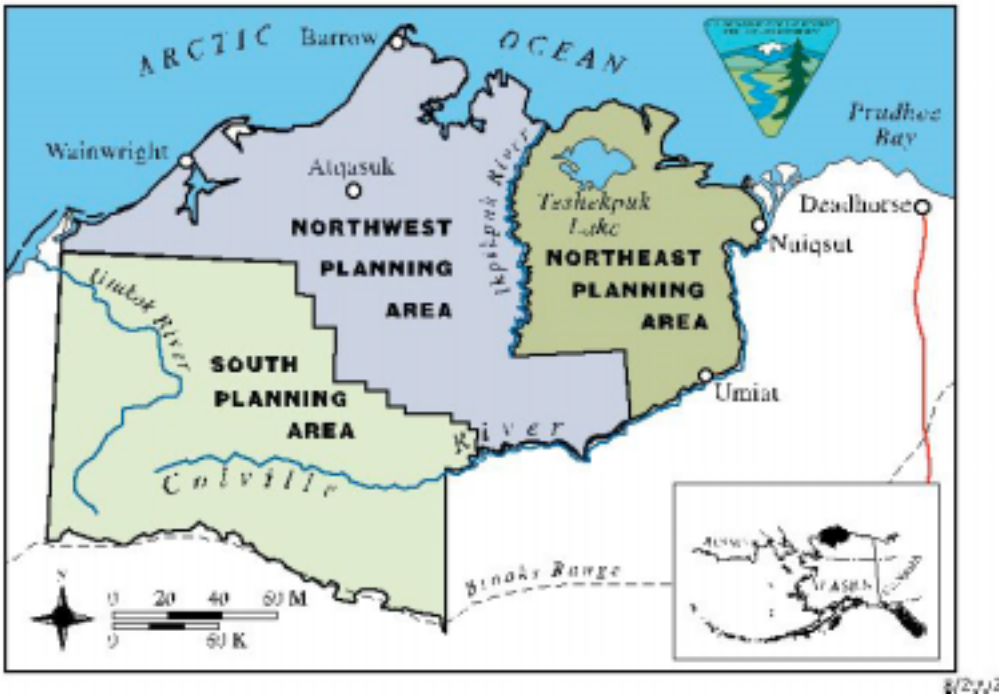
Additional information on this project, including the details for all public meetings and comment periods, is posted on the BLM website. Log on to: www.ak.blm.gov.

Also in this issue. . .

BLM Releases Alternatives for Managing 8.8 Million Acres in Northwest NPR-A

BLM has released a draft activity plan and environmental impact statement for 8.8 million acres of public land in the northwest corner of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The plan, when adopted, will guide the future multiple-use management for the lands under study.

The plan seeks to answer the questions (1) what lands should BLM offer for oil and gas leasing? (2) what measures should be developed to protect important surface resources? and (3) what non-oil and gas land allocations should be considered?



Alternatives

BLM has identified and analyzed four possible alternative management prescriptions. These are for comparative purposes and "it is entirely possible that we will develop another alternative in the final EIS that blends portions of two or more alternatives," says BLM team leader Curtis Wilson. For now, BLM has not indicated a preferred alternative. "We want to see what the public has to say about these options before proceeding," says Wilson. Comments received during the public comment period will be considered in developing the preferred alternative.

Alternative A would make all BLM-administered lands in the planning area available to oil and gas leasing. However, protective measures such as applying stipulations and required operating procedures to oil develop would still occur and additional protection could be introduced following future analysis on specific activities if proposed.

Alternative B would make 96 percent of the BLM-administered lands available for oil and gas leasing. A proposed Kasegaluk Lagoon Special Area would not be available for leasing and no permanent oil and gas facilities would be allowed in and along the coastal waterways and lagoons (except two rights-of-way to be designated near Wainwright and Peard Bay). Stipulations and required operating procedures would restrict placement of permanent oil and gas facilities around lakes, rivers and important habitat.

Alternative C would make 47 percent of the BLM-administered lands available for oil and gas leasing. Three areas would be proposed for wilderness study, 22 rivers would be proposed for special designation, and federal subsurface oil and gas below lands owned or selected by three village corporations (Atqasuk, Barrow and Wainwright) would not be available for leasing.

Alternative D is the No Action Alternative and reflects BLM's current management. No new oil and gas leasing would occur nor would any special designations be recommended. Two options exist for winter seismic exploration: one would allow it to continue and the other would prohibit it.

Special places

A small portion in the extreme northeast part of this planning area is part of the Teshekpuk lake Special Area defined in 1977 to

protect waterbird habitat.

The northern banks of the Colville river a part of the Colville River Special Area designed in 1977 to protect raptor habitat.

The Kasegaluk Lagoon in the far northwestern corner of the planning area is rich in wildlife including migratory birds and marine mammals and features marine tidal flats that are rare on the North Slope.

The hills and mountains of the Brooks Range found in the southern part of the planning area are particularly remote and rarely visited by even subsistence hunters. They feature good opportunities for hiking and scenic vistas in high terrain. There are known mineral deposits as well.

Relation to other planning

The northwest NPR-A plan is the second of three separate general land use plans being developed for the NPR-A. The first plan, completed in 1998, covers 4.6 million acres of public land in the northeast portion of the reserve. A third planning effort, yet to begin, will cover the southern portion of the reserve and the Colville River. A separate planning effort is studying full field development in the northeast corner of NPR-A.

–Edward Bovy

Scott Guyer

These caribou dropped by to check on some BLMers conducting a study to determine whether ice roads affect permafrost. (See a related story on science in the NPR-A on pages 6-7.)

How to Comment

BLM will accept comments on the draft EIS through March 18, 2003.

There are three ways to comment: orally at one of the public meetings, in writing by traditional mail, and electronically through the internet.

Written comments sent by mail should be addressed to: NPRA Planning Team, BLM, 222 W. 7th Ave. #13, Anchorage, AK 99513.

To comment through your computer, log onto the NRP-A home page (URL address listed below) where the entire EIS can be read and reviewed.

BLM has teamed up with the Environmental Science Research Institute. (ESRI) to develop a state-of-the-art website for submitting comments. "Readers will be able to actually select and copy specific sentences from the document directly into their own comment form. The software will automatically assign a comment number to it so we can assign it to a specialist and track it through the final EIS," said team leader Curtis Wilson. "Advance web users can review and even draw on our electronic maps, calling items to our attention, adding or modifying data, or marking changes they would like to see made." These comments will be submitted automatically when you log off. Or, if you prefer, you can correspond by email directly to: nwnpr-acomment@ak.blm.gov.

Websites

To read or comment on EIS: www.ak.blm.gov/nwnpra/index.html

For general information on NPRA and the previous EIS for northeast NPR-A: www.aurora.ak.blm.gov/.

Public Meeting Schedule Northwest NPR-A EIS

BLM is hosting a number of public meetings around the state. Each meeting will be preceded by an open house where resource specialists will be available to answer questions, review or clarify the alternatives and discuss any aspect of the EIS. BLM will accept oral and written comments during the public meeting.

city/village	date	location	open house	public meeting
Anchorage	February 13	Loussac Public Library	5:30 pm to 7:00 pm	7:00 pm to 10:30 pm
Anaktuvuk Pass	February 19	Village Community Center	5:00 pm to 6:30 pm	7:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Atqasuk	February 24	Village Community Center	5:00 pm to 6:30 pm	7:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Barrow	February 27	Village Community Center	5:00 pm to 6:30 pm	7:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Fairbanks	February 12	Noel Wien Public Library	4:30 pm to 6:00 pm	7:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Nuiqsut	February 25	Village Community Center	5:00 pm to 6:30 pm	7:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Point Lay	February 18	Village Community Center	5:00 pm to 6:30 pm	7:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Wainwright	February 20	James Community Center	5:00 pm to 6:30 pm	7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

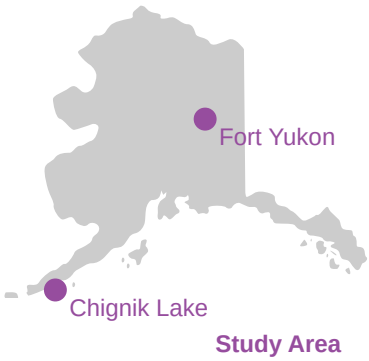
We've Got Gas

New technologies may lower fuel costs in rural Alaska... but not for awhile

DGGS

Picturesque Chignik is another village near the study site.

Arthur C. Banet, Jr.



How do you keep warm and see what you are doing during the long Alaska winter? If you live in a remote Alaska village far from any infrastructure, the fuel of choice for heating and power generation is fuel oil. When oil is refined to diesel fuel it's portable, storable—and expensive. Typical diesel fuel for heating in the lower 48 averages about $1.15 a gallon while in much of rural Alaska it could be more than triple this amount.

Typically the fuel has to be purchased well in advance and barged several times a year via waterways. Weather affects this process dramatically. When barges can't make the trip and supplies run low, the fuel has to be flown in. Transporting, transferring and storing fuel also runs the risk of surface contamination from accidental spills and groundwater contamination from leaking tanks.

High fuel costs stifle opportunities to develop rural economies and in turn trap residents with high monthly heating and power bills. Even with the rural energy equalization program, electricity rates in the remote parts of Alaska run three-to-five times as high as in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

BLM, along with other state and federal agencies, is exploring ways to change this. The State of Alaska's Division Geological Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) has estimated that as many as 25 rural communities in Alaska could benefit from developing coalbed methane (CBM). Economic studies show that even a small field could help if it was beneath or right next to a community or an industry that uses a lot of power (such as a mine). BLM has signed an assistance agreement with DGGS and the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) to evaluate coalbed methane potential in Alaska.

Currently Wainwright, Fort Yukon and Chignik, will serve as test sites for evaluating this potential new way to keep things warm at lower prices.

Chignik Lake, on the Alaska Peninsula, was the first test site. In November, scientists took advantage of a drill rig that was already on site for a water project and used it to explore the local geology for the existence of coal beds. Unfortunately, the geology is far from simple. Coal exposed at the surface did not extend underground as deep as expected, even after two weeks and 700 feet of drilling. But the effort was still worthwhile.

"There is not a whole lot of data for this area and each turn of the drill tells us a little more, whether it's raining, blowing or snowing. Various mechanical problems during this particular exploration drilling underscored the remoteness of support to rural villages," says BLM's mineral resource development engineer Bob Fisk.

Primary data like field observations and drilling includes finding coals, their thickness, depth and lateral extent. The next step is to evaluate the gas potential, flow capacity and the effects of dewatering the coal. Under the current agreement, DGGS will set up the drilling contractors, BLM will assist with core logging and geologic interpretation of the coal, and USGS will partner with the state to do gas analysis. DOE, DGGS and BLM will share in the costs of drilling and data analysis. "Since we had access to a portable drill rig at Chignik Lake, we estimated it would cost only $100,000 instead of the $750,000 if we had to fly in a drilling rig," says Fisk. "Alaska is an expensive state in which to do exploration, for any commodity and at any level."

Arthur C. Banet, Jr.

By taking advantage of a drilling rig already in the vicinity, BLM was able to lower costs for the study by 87 percent.

This spring, the agencies will focus on Fort Yukon. There are nearby coal deposits and it may be possible to reenter a "climate hole" drilled by the USGS in early 1990s. (Climate holes are used to measure temperature and depth of permafrost and are used to provide data for global warming studies.) Fisk says plans are being developed to conduct coal dewatering tests and possibly some production testing. Hopefully the three agencies, with assistance from the village, can start this project later this fall.

BLM also anticipates reaching an agreement next year with USGS and DGGS that will cover future gas hydrate studies. Gas hydrates are another promising energy source in which large volumes of gas are locked a lattice of ice in permafrost. Hydrates are known to occur in many locations on the North Slope. A proposed drill hole for coal along the Dalton Highway will look for both coal bed methane and hydrates.

–Edward Bovy

W MORE ON THE WEB:
www.dggs.dnr.state.ak.us
www.epa.gov/coalbed
www.dggs.dnr.state.ak.us/download/0106news.pdf

What is coalbed methane?

Although coal appears solid, it is actually porous on both macroscopic and microscopic scales. Coal is composed of many small particles that create many, many surface areas that, under the right circumstances, can attract and hold (or sorb) large quantities of gas. If the orientation is correct, fractures or cleats in coal facilitate the movement of gas out of the coal matrix, thereby making the coal a reservoir for its own gas. One ton of coal can produce from 7,000 to 46,000 cu. ft. of gas that can be captured and used at a wellhead. CBM production is possible with coal ranging from about 450 feet to a mile in depth.

There are advantages and disadvantages to CBM. Since the gas is usable on site because it has few impurities, it is very attractive to countries and regions that do not currently have access to gas via pipelines. Coal is typically shallow so it is inexpensive to drill. This makes it attractive to cash-strapped economies. Consequently coalbed methane exploration is increasing rapidly and is worldwide in scope. However, it requires some skill to maintain CBM gas facilities. Also, coal needs to be dewatered to initiate gas flow. Even though the water may be clean, it still needs proper disposal. Several techniques can be used including reinjecting it underground, letting the water evaporate in holding ponds, or diluting it with other surface waters.

Right now CBM accounts for up to about eight percent of U.S. domestic natural gas production. As domestic oil production continues to decline, CBM will continue to increase in importance.

Alaska has at least half the coal resources in the United States. DGGS estimates that Alaska may have more than a 1,000 trillion cubic feet of CBM and that there is potential for both domestic use and export. However much work needs to be done to fill in data gaps in several areas such as determining the best way to dispose of water.

More Than Oil

Scientists use NPR-A as an outdoor laboratory to study the past and present to guide the future

The Other Side of NPR-A

(second of a series)

Nearly the size of Indiana, the 23.5-million-acre National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska is often in the news for its sizeable oil and gas resources. Less widely known is the reserve's increasing prominence in scientific circles.

For years NPR-A's most famous research location has been a small, rocky hill called the Mesa site, now considered a world-class archeological find. During the past 22 years, BLM's excavations at the Mesa have yielded invaluable information on the migration of people from Asia to North America approximately 12,000 years ago.

With field work on the Mesa site nearing completion, BLM archeologists and their colleagues at numerous universities are busy searching NPR-A for additional sites.

"The North Slope is special in that it provides an unbroken record of human occupation, from the first footsteps to the current day," says Mike Kunz, the BLM Northern Field Office archeologist who led the Mesa project.

"In the last 10 years, we have identified more than 300 archeological sites, most of them prehistoric," says Kunz. "And I'd estimate that we've examined less than 10 percent of NPR-A so far."

This remote automated river gaging station along the Colville River measures water levels and temperatures, then transmits the data by satellite as part of ongoing BLM hydrologic studies in NPR-A.

BLM hydrologist Richard Kemnitz and John Wolf collect water samples as part of a winter lake monitoring project. The study will help determine recharge rates for lakes that could be used to construct ice roads.

Recent fossil discoveries have made NPR-A's paleontological resources nearly as famous as its archeological ones. Each summer BLM permits and monitors several university-funded fossil digs along the Colville River, whose bluffs have become one of the world's premier locations for recovering fossils of polar dinosaurs.

While archeologists and paleontologists study NPR-A's past, other researchers are concentrating on learning more about the present. The area is so remote and so infrequently visited that many projects focus on cataloging what's out there.

One of these projects is the water resource inventory being conducted by Northern Field Office hydrologists Jon Kostohrys and Richard Kemnitz. Their work, which Kostohrys began in 1999,

includes measuring water quantity and quality in NPR-A rivers and lakes, as well as surveying the evolving shape of river channels. Data is entered into BLM's Geographic Information System and then used to characterize watershed characteristics and prepare hydrologic maps of the area.

Since 2000 the two hydrologists have used automated water level recorders and weather stations to collect continuous information about daily and seasonal changes in streamflow and climate. Because the area is remote, data at many sites is collected automatically and stored on-site until Kemnitz visits to transfer the information to a laptop computer. He's lucky to make it to the far-flung sites three times a summer.

A satellite interface, to be installed in 2003, will make this data available to researchers in real time. "This has numerous advantages," says Kemnitz. "You find out right away if your equipment is working," he says, "and you can back up the information on your office computer, so if a bear messes with the recorder, you haven't lost months of data." Kemnitz also hopes the real-time data will be useful in giving recreationists and researchers advance warning of flooding rivers.

Some ongoing research projects in NPR-A directly relate to the development of the area's oil and gas resources. Wildlife biologist Dave Yokel is three years into a long-term project to study the impact on vegetation from ice roads and seismic trails in NPR-A. Oil and gas exploration companies build temporary ice roads or drag skid-mounted equipment along snow-covered trails for winter access to areas that in summer becomes impassable wet tundra, lakes, and bogs. Yokel's project involves monitoring vegetation recovery at 89 research plots located along past road and trail routes. Results so far describe the initial impacts and the vegetation's recovery after two to three years.

BLM researchers have been trying to unlock the secrets of the Mesa Site for more than 22 years. This site has been providing information key to understanding human migration patterns in North America.

Another vegetation study by BLM biologists Scott Guyer and John Payne compared the impacts of recent ice roads to one constructed in 1978 that connected the Kikiakrorak gravel pit to the Inigok drill site *(see photo on page 5)*. BLM wants to know whether it is preferable for ice roads to follow the same route or to be offset.

With so few people covering so much ground, BLM researchers must cooperate with colleagues at other agencies, especially the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the North Slope Borough, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. BLM's involvement typically consists of some combination of planning the project, contributing money, assisting with field work, and interpreting results. Recent projects have included tracking migrations of the Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd, studying raptor habitat along the Colville River bluffs, and placing tiny satellite transmitters on Spectacled Eiders to see how they move through NPR-A.

Coordination of this complex research effort took a major step forward in 2002 with the creation of the NPR-A Research and Monitoring Advisory Team. The team includes representatives from federal, state and North Slope Borough agencies, the oil industry, environmental groups, academia, and other interested parties. During biannual meetings, the team prioritizes research projects and advises BLM on how research money should be spent.

At its September 2002 meeting the team recommended projects such as studying how noise from seismic exploration on frozen lakes affects arctic fish and observing caribou distribution and movements around oil pipelines, well pads, and roads.

NPR-A's remoteness, difficult travel, and brutal, eight-month winters will always make it a hard place to do research. On some projects, up to 85 percent of research costs go to logistical support–getting researchers to and from the site. With vast distances, limited roads and few airstrips, many NPR-A projects involve setting up remote camps and expensive helicopter support. Despite these challenges, the diversity and success of ongoing projects suggest the researchers' efforts are well rewarded.

–Craig McCaa

Trans-Alaska Pipeline System Right-of-Way

Good for Another 30 Years

"We need the pipeline even more now than when it was built," said Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton referring to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. Moments later she granted a 30-year renewal of the Federal Grant and Agreement of Right-of-Way for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System on January 8, 2003 in Washington D. C. "Renewing the pipeline will go a long way toward ensuring energy and economic security for our nation for the next three decades," said Norton

Before an audience that included oil executives, DOI and BLM leadership, and the TAPS renewal team, Norton highlighted the fact that 30 years ago "Congress was courageous when it voted to approve a pipeline of unimaginable complexity and cost. Today," she said, "we renew our commitment to combine technological progress with strict environmental protection."

Norton's renewal didn't come without change, though, as she added a provision to the federal right-of-way grant for the government to review and audit each of the TAPS owners tri-annually to ensure they can fulfill their financial obligations. She said the additional oversight will "help assure that the resources will exist to operate and maintain the pipeline in a safe and environmentally protective manner and to restore the land following closure."

Alaska Governor Frank Murkowski noted, "This is a great day for Alaska and for the nation. With the signing of these renewals, we acknowledge the forward thinking of those who designed and constructed the pipeline system, as well as the competent operation of it."

Murkowski also applauded the efforts of the Joint Pipeline Office (JPO), seven state and six federal agencies voluntarily working together to oversee the TAPS. "The JPO provides efficient, effective oversight to make sure the pipeline is operated in a safe, environmentally sound, and financially productive manner. The TAPS has carried more than 14 billion barrels of oil, generating more than $400 billion in economic benefit to the nation. So the JPO's oversight is a cooperative effort of which we can justifiably be proud," Governor Murkowski said.

Under BLM leadership, the JPO documented the fact that the TAPS was in full legal and regulatory compliance with all federal and state requirements. This was based upon thousands of surveillances, assessments, audits and reports, all done under full scrutiny from the congress, the media and the members of the public.

The Secretary issued the 30-year renewal, BLM's preferred alternative as analyzed in detail in a Final Environmental Impact Statement, after a full public disclosure and involvement process that analyzed the social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts of renewing TAPS. The State of Alaska renewed its lease in November 2002. The original authorization expires January 23, 2004.

Joining Secretary Norton and Governor Murkowski at the signing table were Senator Lisa Murkowski, Vice Commandant Thomas Barrett, U. S. Coast Guard, Drue Pearce, Alaska's senior advisor to the secretary, Kathleen Clarke, BLM director, and Jerry Brossia, BLM Authorized Officer for JPO.

The 800-mile TAPS currently supplies a critical 17 percent of the nation's crude oil production. For 27 years it has achieved a 99.6 percent operational record.

–Donna Gindle

Special assistant Drue Pearce, Senator and Governor Murkowski, Jerry Brossia (Joint Pipeline Office), Kathleen Clarke (Director, BLM) watch Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton renew the Trans Alaska Pipeline federal grant of right-of-way.

BLM Completes Koyukuk Mineral Assessment

11-million acre area has potential for undiscovered mineral resources

BLM has completed a new mineral resource assessment of the Koyukuk Mining District in northern Alaska; an 11.6-million-acre area which comprises the upper portion of the Koyukuk River basin. A team of BLM geologists and mining engineers spent four field seasons mapping and sampling 269 mines, prospects, and mineral occurrences to identify their nature and extent. Areas having potential for undiscovered mineral resources were also examined. The team collected more than 2,000 rock, soil, stream sediment, and placer samples as part of their study. (See *BLM Alaska Frontiers*, June/July 2000 issue.)

BLM geologists were able to estimate the mineral development potential at many sites in the Koyukuk by reviewing and analyzing field data, sample analysis, and economic feasibility studies. The district is a known gold producer: to date nearly ten tons of placer gold have been extracted from the Koyukuk's streambeds. It also has potential to produce copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, tin, antimony, chrome and coal.

BLM lands along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Corridor cross the eastern portion of the district and are included in the study. This area is of particular interest to the BLM because 11 gold placer mines were active within and adjacent to the corridor during the assessment. Information such as location, history, and mineral development potential were compiled for these sites as well as other federal, state, and Native lands within the district. This will provide data for resource specialists and land planners who want to know more about the area's mineral resources.

Locations designated as having potential for undiscovered mineral resources will be of interest to mining companies seeking new sources of metals such as gold and copper. Some of these areas are located on federal and state lands open to mineral entry.

BLM formed partnerships with other government agencies and private sectors as part of the Koyukuk study. In a joint agreement the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (ADGGS), the BLM funded an airborne geophysical survey of a 533-square-mile area in the northeast corner of the district. These surveys can detect underground metallic mineral deposits even if covered by thick vegetation. Results of the survey were published through ADGGS. The BLM also used ground penetrating radar profiles at three known placer deposits to identify channel locations and depth to bedrock.

The entire effort is part of the BLM's ongoing statewide mining district assessment program as required by the Alaska National Interest Lands and Conservation Act. Assessments for the Delta River and Aniak mining districts are currently underway and final reports should be published in 2005 and 2006 respectively.

–Joe Kurtak

Joe Kurtak

BLM geologist Bob Klieforth examines volcanic rocks near Heart Mountain in the Koyukuk Mining District.

The results of the Koyukuk Mining District study have been published as BLM Alaska Technical Report 50: **Mineral Investigations in the Koyukuk Mining District, Northern, Alaska** by Joseph M. Kurtak, Robert F. Klieforth, John M.Clark, and Elizabeth A. Maclean. Copies of the report are available at no cost while supplies last. Contact: Joe Kurtak (907) 271-3238, Jane Albrecht at the Juneau Mineral Information Center (907) 364-1553, or the BLM Public Information Center in Fairbanks at (907) 474-2251. Copies are also placed in selected local libraries throughout Alaska.

Frontier Flashes

News from around Alaska

THOMPSON PASS. After completing an environmental analysis for proposed heliski operations near Thompson Pass in December, BLM authorized special recreation permits for five helicopter guide services, one backcountry guide service, one snowcat skiing/snowboard operator, the 2003 Chugach Mountain Festival, and up to six commercial film permits.

BLM expects to issue the permits in late February. The affected area includes 460,800 acres of unencumbered public lands administered by the BLM. The season for use is Feb. 1 to May 15, 2003.

Teresa McPherson

RAC withdrawal review subcommittee. (left to right) Nolan Heath (BLM), council chairman Gary Gustafson, and council members Paul Roehl, Tom Crafford and Steve Simmons.

A subcommittee of BLM's Resource Advisory Council is looking at ways to open BLM-managed public lands currently closed to certain public uses due to decades-old federal land withdrawals. The group selected 39 townships in the Bristol Bay Region that might serve as pilot areas and presented its findings and recommendations to the full council at its meeting February 13-14 in Anchorage.

ANCHORAGE. The Chugach National Forest is considering a proposal to collocate a Forest Service facility at BLM's Campbell Tract. Collocation is one of the initiatives identified under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 that requires agencies to look for ways to eliminate duplication of facilities or services. In the Lower 48, collocation has helped BLM and the Forest Service offer 'boundaryless' service to our customers, regardless of internal processes or administrative boundaries.

The Chugach NF completed a preliminary project analysis last year that identified the Campbell Tract as their preferred alternative. This analysis is now under review by FS officials in Washington, D.C. Once BLM receives a written proposal, it will initiate a full public process. Those interested will have an opportunity to learn more about the proposal and offer comments for consideration.

COLDFOOT. The new interagency visitor center in Coldfoot is nearly complete. However, higher than anticipated construction costs resulted in a shortfall for funding the exhibits. BLM anticipates that it is likely the building will not open to the pubic until the start of the 2004 visitor season.

HAINES. Earlier this winter BLM closed an illegal dumping site on a small parcel of public lands at Mile 7 of the Haines Highway. The site had been used extensively for illegal garbage dumping and target practice. BLM blocked vehicle access to the site to prevent further contamination of the lands. Chilkoot Indian Association then cleaned up the site and agreed to monitor the area for BLM. The site is adjacent to Chilkoot Indian Association lands.

Who owns what in Alaska?

Here are the latest BLM land ownership calculations, current as of October 1, 2002. Numbers are expressed in millions of acres.

Federal	
BLM	86.0
Defense/other federal	2.0
National forest system	22.0
National park system	54.0
National wildlife refuge syst.	70.7
State	
State of Alaska	90.6
Private	
Native corporations	37.5
Other	2.7
Total Alaska	365.5

TANGLE LAKES. BLM issued conveyance documents Jan. 14, 2003, transferring to the State of Alaska approximately 102,000 acres in seven townships near the eastern end of the Denali Highway. The transfers included portions of the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District north of the highway. Although the State's selections within the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District were valid, BLM delayed the issuance of its approval decisions until it secured an agreement from the State for appropriate cultural protection on the lands. After the agreement was in place, BLM looked at protests filed by Ahtna Regional Corp. and Copper River Native Assoc. and approved the selections. Interested parties had 30 days in which to appeal the decisions. No timely appeals were filed, and the lands were subsequently transferred.

The remaining lands within the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District are also selected by the State, with the exception of the Delta National Wild and Scenic River corridor. BLM will not act on the remaining selections until the State asks to receive title.

Frontier People

Teresa McPherson

Anchorage musher Ken Ford shows Jaime Bessee how to harness a dog team during a short run at BLM's Campbell Tract in January. While many area trails lacked adequate snow for dog mushing this season, Campbell Tract trails have retained much of the season's scant snowfall due to lower temps. Bessee is a program assistant for Drue Pearce, Alaska's Special Assistant to Interior Secretary Gale Norton.

BLM Alaska Fire Service smokejumpers **Mike Bradley** and **Ivan Smith** were among an elite crew of U.S. firefighters dispatched to Australia in late January to assist firefighting efforts during this extreme Australian fire season. Bradley and Smith joined other smokejumpers and hotshots on a complex of fires in northeastern Victoria. Alaska's Type 1Team Incident Commander **Dave Dash** is transferring to the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise to head the aviation division.

Brian Sterbenz

Fire crews monitoring burn piles on Campbell Tract.

ANCHORAGE. BLM fire specialists hope to begin burning woody debris piles at the Campbell Tract in March, if wind and weather conditions are right. The debris was left from last summer's spruce thinning project to reduce fire danger on the tract. Approximately 350 piles will be burned in a one- to two-week period. Once burning begins, fire specialists will monitor wind conditions each day prior to igniting to be certain that smoke moves away from area subdivisions. However, some residents may see smoke for short periods and some recreation trails may be temporarily closed.

The Campbell Tract fuel reduction effort was one of many similar projects in the Anchorage bowl to reduce fire danger as area spruce forests continue to suffer from spruce bark beetle infestations.

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BLM-Alaska Frontiers is published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

BLM-AK-GI-94-005-1120-912